

152 A FUNERAL
SERMON
ON

Mr. *Richard Wells*,
Preach'd at DEPTFORD,
Oct. 3. 1710.

By A. HOLDEN. K

Rev. 14. 13. *Blessed are the dead which
die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea,
saith the Spirit, that they may rest from
their labours, and their works do follow
them.*

L O N D O N,
Printed by J. Darby, and Sold by J. Baker at
Mercers-Chappel in Cheapside. 1710.

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Printed by J. Dwyer, and sold by W. Dwyer, at the
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LONDON: 1710.

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2 TIM. iv. 7, 8.

I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judg shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

THESE Words being recommended to me by the Relict of the Person deceas'd, as a Subject proper upon this melancholy occasion; I shall endeavour to make what Improvement of 'em I

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can, in order (if it please God) the living may be instructed; or that we may have such good Impressions made upon our Minds, as to teach us to be wise, and remember our latter end; to make the same Provision *St. Paul* had done in our Text, namely, of a Crown of Righteousness and Immortality.

That I may set the Meaning of 'em in as clear light as I can, and shew you how justly they are applicable to our present occasion; it will be necessary I should give you some account of their Connexion, and the particular Reason of their Insertion in this Epistle.

The Apostle (we may assure our selves) was as far from boasting of himself as any one; yea he seems particularly careful to avoid entering into his own Character upon this account, lest he should be thought guilty of Ostentation: and when the *Corinthians* laid him under a sort of necessity to do it, he enters upon it with reluctance, using so handsom an Apology, with such a good Design, as might shew 'em how far a man might justify himself, and yet be free from Pride and vain Glory, or from assuming an unlawful Dominion over his fellow Creatures; and that things spiritual, even extraordinary Gifts, did not give 'em a right to be *Lords over their Faith, but helpers of their Joy*. Now as *St. Paul* was careful that no Offence might be given to the weak, or the most indigent of the faithful, so he was as diligent

diligent in imbracing every opportunity to propagate the Gospel, and to strengthen those who had receiv'd the Truth in the love of it. And as he was himself expos'd to Trouble and Persecution more particularly and eminently, so he took care that his Bonds should be no Offence to those whose Inclinations were towards the Doctrine of God our Saviour.

This he especially takes care of in all his Epistles; and in the History of his Examination before *Festus*, when he had almost perswaded King *Agrippa* to be a Christian, he wishes him even as he was, *i. e.* so perswaded of the same Opinion, excepting (says he) that I would not have you in *these bonds*, Acts 26. 29.

When he wrote this Epistle to *Timothy*, he was in the same Circumstance, a Prisoner at *Rome*, for the sake of Jesus Christ, and indeed ready to be offer'd up, being then about to make his second Appearance before *Nero*, which prov'd his last, soon after finishing his Course.

The Sense of these Things, and that he must quickly depart, might make him the more earnest to improve his time, in doing all the good in the world he could; and since he had a particular and personal Affection and Friendship to *Timothy*, he took the opportunity to be very plain and distinct with him, knowing the many Temptations
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he would meet with, and the weakness of humane nature to resist.

For this Reason he leaves this Epistle with him, as the last and most mature Advice a departing Father would give his Child; recommending to him such a Course, and such Measures, as he knew by Experience would produce good Effects.

Thus St. Paul exhorts him, to *hold fast the form of sound Words*, which he had deliver'd to him *in Faith and Love*; so to behave himself upon all accounts, that the Enemies of Christianity might have no occasion to blaspheme; and also to fortify himself against the heresies of those, who design'd only to make *a gain of godliness*.

Moreover, if after St. Paul's Death any should be so ungrateful or malicious, as to detract from his Character, his Doctrine and Manner of Life, the Design he had in view, and the Sufferings he underwent upon this account; he left Timothy a living Witness to the contrary, who had been thoroughly acquainted with these things.

Again, he charges him in the most solemn manner, as he would answer it *before God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who shall judge the Quick and the Dead at his appearing and his Kingdom, to preach the Word, be instant in Season and out of Season, to rebuke and exhort with all Patience, and good Reason, or with Long-suffering and Doctrine*. And the Reason of this is, because

because he foresaw that the *Time would come when Men would not endure sound Doctrine*; i. e. they would be apt to degenerate from the Truth, to turn from the Simplicity of the Gospel, to Idolatry and Superstition: therefore (as if he should say) be thou bold as a Lion, and do the Work of an Evangelist, to which thou art call'd; give full Proof of thy Ministry, as being substantial, and not to be baffled by Opposition either from Earth or Hell.

The Argument he makes use of to encourage him to do the utmost he could in this so good a Work, is express'd in the words before my Text, *I am now ready to be offer'd up, and the time of my Departure is at hand*. I am now (as if he had said) ready to seal the Doctrine of God my Saviour with my Blood, to suffer Martyrdom for the sake of the Gospel; and in this respect am ready to follow the Example of my Lord and Master, to whose Death I have desir'd to be conform'd, who died upon the Cross. And thus am I to be offer'd up, tho not as a Sacrifice expiatory, yet as an Example to others; therefore let this incite thee, as I am now about to leave the World, faithfully to discharge the Work of an Evangelist; for tho I am ready to be offer'd up, yet in this I can triumph, that I have kept the Faith. This is a particular Pleasure and Satisfaction to my Mind, that in keeping the Faith,

Faith, I finish my Course, and hence I have a just Claim to the promis'd Rewards.

Let this encourage thee (my Son Timothy) to go on, that thou also mayst thus triumphantly finish thy Course, in approving thy self a Workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

Thus having given you an Account of the Connexion of these words, I proceed more particularly to consider them; in which we have several things observable.

I. The Nature of a Christian's Life, as it appear'd in the first Ages of Christianity, and as in reality it is at this time; express'd in these words, *I have fought a good Fight, &c.*

II. The particular Care and Circumspection which should attend every Christian, and the constant Application of Mind to make such an Exit, as that he may appeal to God, in finishing his Course, *that he has kept the Faith.*

III. That the Consideration of a future State of everlasting Happiness, which the Christian Oeconomy more clearly proposeth as our Reward, than any other Institution whatsoever, should support our Minds both living and dying; and of this St. Paul made a very

very just and good Application to himself, that as he had acted sincerely in the Service of his God, there was *laid up for him a Crown of Righteousness.*

IV. Such is the Dispensation of the Divine Goodness, so wisely contriv'd, that these Rewards are distributed in a way of Justice as well as Mercy. *Christ the righteous Judge shall give me a Crown of Righteousness at that day.*

V. The comfortable and general Application which he makes of this Doctrine, *not to me only, but to all them also that love his Appearing.*

I. We are first to consider the Nature of a Christian's Life, as it was in the first Ages of Christianity, and which now also holds good with respect to our selves, as being under the same Dispensation; this St. Paul expresseth in the Words before us, *I have fought a good Fight, &c.*

It is, I think, without dispute, that in these Expressions, the Apostle alludes to the Olympick Games, so very famous among the *Grecians*, wherein they us'd the Exercises of Wrestling and Running; in
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which, as there was striving and contending with each other for Victory, so there were Judges appointed to determine who had won the Prize. Thus *St. Paul* *, I have contended in the best Cause, I have fought to the best Advantage, knowing upon what grounds I have done it; and in running my Course I have not been negligent: therefore I am intitled to the Prize. The meaning of which is, that as he had been call'd to the Faith of the Gospel, and from the Nature and Clearness of the Evidence, was fully convinc'd of the Truth thereof; so he had not been backward to oppose all the Enemies of Christianity of what kind soever; he boldly asserted the Truth as it is in *Jesus*, notwithstanding the Rage and Malice of Men against it. Thus he tells us, *that he had fought with beasts at Ephesus*, 1 Cor. xv. 32. that is, he had there contended with unreasonable Men for the Truth of the Gospel. But setting aside these external Enemies, with whom he engaged, there were others of a different kind to be subdu'd, whom it was not only his Lot to contend with, but is also the Lot of all good Christians; and these are the

* Τὸν ἀγῶνα ἢ καλὸν ἡγώνισμα, ἢ δόμον τέλεινα.

Passions common to Men. Upon which account the Life of a Christian is now the same as in the first Ages of Christianity, our own corrupt Appetites being the Enemies with which we daily conflict: Hence the Apostle, *We wrestle not against Flesh and Blood, i. e. not against Flesh and Blood only, but against Principalities, and Powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places*, Eph. vi. 12. These the Devil makes use of to accomplish his Designs, and suggests his Blasphemies: Against these then we ought to fight.

And perhaps it is the hardest part of a Christian's Life to be thoroughly acquainted with himself, and able to reconcile all the Powers and Faculties of his Mind to what the Gospel recommends; to get the Victory over his Will and sinful Inclinations, and instead of vicious to acquire vertuous Habits.

In order to this there must be the greatest Diligence and Watchfulness, lest we should at any time be surpriz'd and overcome by our Enemies.

Upon the whole then, we may collect, that a Christian's Life in this World is properly compar'd to a Warfare; and therefore *the Weapons of our Warfare* are said *not to be carnal but spiritual*, which St. Paul gives us an account of under the

Metaphorical Terms of *having our Loins girt about with Truth, putting on the Breastplate of Righteousness, and having our Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel, and above all the Shield of Faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; which, together with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, compleat the Armour of a Christian, Eph. vi. 13, 14, 15, &c.*

Now (as I hinted before) the most potent Enemies we have to overcome, are those of our Household: and we may say that we have in some good measure got the Victory, when we take no pleasure in the ways of Sin, but our Delight is in the Law of the Lord our God; when we take pleasure in Holiness, then we may say (through the Divine Assistance) we *have fought a good Fight*. And thus you see in the first place, what the Nature of a Christian's Life is.

II. I observe Secondly, the particular Care and Circumspection which should attend every Christian, and the constant Application of Mind to make such an Exit, that in finishing his Course he may appeal to God in the Words of the Apostle, *I have kept the Faith*.

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We have a certain Course to finish, which the Divine Being determines for us: *It is appointed for all men once to die.* But tho this be so evident a Truth, yet it makes but weak Impressions on the Minds of Men in general. If we narrowly regard the Conduct of the greatest part of Mankind, what they do during the whole Course of their Lives, we shall find them following and repeating the same kinds of Vanity, which their Age, Sex and Circumstances in the World prompt 'em to; and this for the most part without considering, that their Course must be finish'd in a little time: *This is a sore disease.* But when Christianity takes possession of the Mind effectually, such a Person will then consider, that let his Course be longer or shorter, according as it pleases God, he has something to do for God in the World: He was not created, and now converted to the Faith of the Gospel, that he might remain useless and unprofitable in this Life, only to serve himself. Now it will be his business to work whilst it is called to day, to make the best Improvement of his time, in doing what good he can in the Station wherein Providence has set him, endeavouring to bring Glory and Honour to his Blessed Redeemer.

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Such Persons resolve by the Grace of God to go on in a steady Course of Vertue and Religion, esteeming it their Duty to keep *a Conscience void of Offence, both to God and Man.* These when they come to die, can appeal to God, when expiring and finishing their Course, can say, *Lord thou knowest we have endeavoured to keep the Faith.*

By *the Faith*, we are to understand that Revelation which God has made of his Will in the Holy Scriptures, which he has confirm'd to us by a Cloud of Witnesses, so that there remains not the least ground to doubt the Divine Authority thereof. The Testimony which he has therefore given us of his Son, he requires us to believe, and to take Jesus for our Law-giver and Saviour.

Now when St. Paul says, *I have kept the Faith*, the Meaning is either,

1. As an Apostle, to whom it was in an extraordinary manner committed; that so far as he had been intrusted with it, he kept true and faithful to his Charge, he stood stedfast to the last in the Belief of Truth, tho he met with abundance of opposition (as I hinted before) both from Men and Devils; all these things did not shock him, he continued notwithstanding stedfast, rooted and grounded in Christ: The same Evidences which
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at first perswaded him of the Truth of the Christian Religion, were still of equal Force upon his Mind; so that he could appeal to God upon this account, when he was just ready to be offer'd up, that he had *kept the Faith*.

Or Secondly, by keeping *the Faith*, we may understand a walking agreeably and conformably to the Rules and Precepts of the Christian Institution. Thus our Saviour tells us, that *they are blessed who hear the Word of God and keep it*, Luke viii. 15. *i. e.* they are blessed who do as the Word of God directs 'em. Moreover our Lord tells his Disciples, that it would thence appear they were so, if they *kept his Commandments*.

And thus to keep the Faith as becomes a Christian, to walk according to the Precepts of that Institution we profess to believe, is absolutely necessary, if when we come to make our Exit, we would be able to appeal to God, every one for our selves, and say, *Lord, I have kept the Faith*.

III. I proceed now to the Third Thing under Consideration; namely, that the future State of everlasting Happiness, which the Christian Oeconomy more clearly proposeth as our Reward, than any other

other Institution whatsoever, should support our Minds when under the greatest Difficulties, both living and dying : and therefore the Apostle concluded very justly, and with good Reason, that having acted uprightly in the Service of his God, there was *laid up for him a Crown of Righteousness.*

'Tis, no doubt, a great Advantage to our Minds in this World under Affliction, to consider, that our Lord has made such ample Provision for us in the next; and it cannot but be a particular Satisfaction to an afflicted Soul to know, that there will be an end put to all those dark and melancholy Scenes which attend a Christian's Life. *Tho Weeping may endure for a Night, yet Joy cometh in the Morning :* And moreover, that the greater the Afflictions have been here, the Rewards will be in proportion hereafter. This cannot but be a great stay to our Minds when in the depth of Sorrow, to consider, that *there is a Crown of Righteousness laid up for us.*

We read frequently in the Scriptures, that the People of God are Kings; thus *Christ is said to have made us Kings unto our God, Rev. i. 6.* And St. Paul in my Text speaks of a *Crown of Righteousness;* by which is intimated to us, 1st. The
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Nature of that future State, and glorious World as yet to us unknown, that we shall then be above the reach of our Enemies, free from Sin, and consequently in a State of Indolence, or in perfect Ease: for there *the wicked shall cease from troubling, and there the weary shall be at rest; all Tears shall be wiped from our Eyes, and Sorrow and Sighing shall flee away.*

2. That as the Delight of a good Christian is in Holiness and Righteousness, so herein the very Perfection of his Happiness consists: In the future State he shall be crown'd with it, being of the greatest Value and Importance: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness; for they shall be fill'd,* Matth. v. 6. This must needs yield inexpressible Joy, when upon the strictest Examination of our Souls we can find no Guilt to charge our selves with. And what, I beseech you, makes Heaven so delightful, but the Conformity of our Minds to the moral Perfections of the Deity? In a word, the Meaning of all these Expressions, of Kings, and being crown'd, is, to shew us the Dignity of a future State, and that perfect Happiness which will attend the People of God. Whatsoever Notions we can form to our selves of the Greatness of Earthly Princes, the Splendor and

Magnificence of their Courts, the Affluence of every thing which may be any way suppos'd to contribute either to the Greatness or Comfort of Life; let us raise our Thoughts and heighten our Imaginations, in forming to our selves all the agreeable Ideas we can of these things, yet they will all be infinitely out done in Glory, Magnificence and Majesty, and whatsoever can render a Creature substantially happy.

And, to conclude this Head, we may hence infer, that those who hate Religion in this World, and die in such Sentiments, will never love it in the World to come; and consequently 'tis impossible, in the nature of the thing, such should be happy. It is being crown'd with Righteousness, which must give the Mind that Satisfaction, and rational Pleasure which cannot be express'd; such then whose Minds are not thus prepar'd by keeping the Faith, will never finish their Course with Joy, or obtain a Crown of Righteousness hereafter: It can no way fit 'em, because their Souls are not reconcil'd to the ways of God and Holiness.

As these Prospects should support the godly under all their Afflictions and Trials; so we should all be diligent in examining

mining our selves whether we are really in love with Goodness.

IV. Such is the Dispensation of the Divine Goodness, so wisely contriv'd is our Salvation, that these Rewards are distributed in a way of Justice as well as Mercy: *There is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which Christ the righteous Judge shall give me at that day*, that is, the Day of Judgment; still alluding to the Olympic Games, where there were Judges appointed of the Performances, who had won the Prize, and to whom it ought to be given, according to the Rules of Justice.

I think 'tis easy to account for the Justice and Mercy of the Dispensation: Tho both are exercis'd towards the same Person, yet there is not the least Contradiction; for only consider, that our Sins are pardon'd upon the account of the Merits and Expiation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that whosoever believes on him and repents, is pronounc'd acquitted in a way of Justice, or according to Law, because our Saviour has paid a valuable Consideration for us. And yet in this there appears the greatest Grace and Goodness, he voluntarily taking our place, offering himself an Offering of sweet smel-

ling Savour unto God for us : Hence we may conclude with the Apostle, that *Grace now reigns through Righteousness unto eternal Life by Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. v. 21. Upon this account it is, further, that we have receiv'd great and precious Promises ; as that he will be our God, and save us from the Wrath to come, give us a Crown of Life and Immortality. Thus, as he is the righteous Judg of Heaven and Earth, he will be faithful to his Word and Promise, yea demonstrate before all his Creatures, that he is just and righteous, both in rewarding and punishing, their own Consciences being Judges, and that with him there is no Iniquity.

Thus will our Saviour say at that Day, when he comes to judg the quick and the dead, and thus will he treat his Saints : For you my Servants who have been faithful to your Trust, and discharg'd your Duties to the best of your Knowledg and Power, as a Reward of your good Services I have prepar'd Places for you ; *Enter into the Joy of your Lord ; Behold, I give you a Crown of Righteousness, which none can take from you.*

V. This brings me to the fifth and last Thing propos'd, namely, that comfortable

fortable and general Application St. Paul makes of this Doctrine: *Not to me only, but unto all them also that love his Appearing.*

If the least Service done him, such as giving a Cup of cold Water to one of his Disciples, shall not escape his Notice, but will be rewarded; and those who have in the smallest Instances shewn their Love to Jesus, shall be crown'd with Righteousness; much more those who have contended with the greatest Enemies of his holy Word, and have suffer'd upon this account.

In short, all such who have their Souls made like unto that of Jesus, are conform'd to God, and are in love with Goodness; these are the Persons whom our Saviour will dignify and distinguish at the great Day of Judgment. What an Advantage then is it to be truly religious, to be devoted to God, *a peculiar People zealous of good Works*? Such love the Lord their God, and consequently the Appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus have I attempted briefly to explain these Words; it remains now that I apply what I have said to our present Circumstances, and the very melancholy Occasion of this Discourse.

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1. We may hence collect, that the greatest, wisest, and best of Men, must necessarily finish their Course in this World: this is not our abiding Place, *We have here no continuing City*; and therefore we must in a little time enter upon that State, with which (as I hinted before) we are as yet in a great measure unacquainted.

This daily Experience gives us full Proof of, particularly in the Instance of our deceas'd Friend, whose Remains are now before us.

I had not the Happiness to be long acquainted with him; but all acknowledg, that he was a Person who approv'd himself, throughout the whole of his Conduct, to be an *Israelite indeed*, of whom it may be truly said, that he has *fought a good Fight*. His Character in that Station of Life wherein Providence had plac'd him, was very bright and exemplary; take him in every Relation and Scene of Life, there appear'd a certain Sweetness of Disposition, and a prudent inoffensive Management: He was the best of Husbands, and the tenderest of Fathers: As a Master, he was compassionate and considerate, not exacting upon his Servants, treating 'em
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always as rational Creatures: In his Commerce in the World, he was exactly Just: In the Service and Worship of his God, diligent and sincere; truly charitable and generous in relieving the Poor; and in supporting the Cause and Interest of Religion he took particular Pleasure: In short, he was ready to do every good Work, and yet careful to do Justice to his Family.

I had not indeed Opportunity to converse with him in his last Sickness, after his Distemper appear'd dangerous; and truly, such was the violence of it, that he was not capable of much Conversation: However, he had not his Work to do, he was prepar'd to meet Death, and to triumph over it in the Words of the Apostle, *Oh Death, where is thy Sting? Oh Grave, where is thy Victory?* The Sum of all then is, that we have all sustain'd a very great Loss, which calls for serious Reflection: The Widow has lost a loving Husband; the Children, an indulgent Father; his Intimates, a true and sincere Friend; the Church has lost a useful Member, and our Country a good Patriot. He is gone, his Course is finish'd, he has *kept the Faith*, and is taken away both from a miserable and ungrateful World, to enjoy that *Crown of Righteousness, which*
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Christ the righteous Judg will give unto all them that love his Appearing. What use therefore ought we to make of such an afflicting Providence?

And here give me Leave (in the first place) to apply my self in a few words to his Relief.

It may be, you are saying as *Naomi* did, *Ruth i. 20. Call me no more Naomi, but Mara; for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.* Your present Affliction must needs be very great, the Burden very heavy and hard to be born; to have the Delight of your Eyes and Comfort of your Life, one with whom you mutually shar'd, not only the Afflictions, but the prosperous Smiles of Providence; to have not only a Husband but a Friend, at once and so suddenly remov'd, seems insupportable.

'Tis indeed much easier to give than to take Advice in the like Case. But however, consider it is the Lord's doing, and remember what the Psalmist says, *Psal. xxxix. 9. I was dumb and open'd not my Mouth, because thou didst it.* God is just and righteous in afflicting, and yet with him is Mercy enough to make up the greatest Loss you can sustain in this World. Thus he is said to be the *Judg of the Widow, and a Father to the fatherless.*

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Consider further, that God has a juster Claim to any of his Creatures, than the highest Relation to 'em can give us: He does us no Injustice when he takes away our Relations or Friends. Consider lastly, that you have not the least Reason to mourn, as those without hope of a glorious Resurrection; and tho it be your Loss for the present, yet it is his Gain. This ought to moderate your Grief, and give you Patience under the mighty Hand of God, and enable you to say, *Not my Will, but thine be done, O Lord. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, and blessed be the Name of the Lord. Cast your Care therefore upon him, for he careth for you.*

2. And to you his Children, let me also address my self in a few words. Consider that God has taken from you a Father, who us'd to pray for you and advise you, of whose tender Affections I need not put you in mind; reflect upon his past Advice and Counsel to you, and tread in his Steps; be dutiful to the living half of your deceas'd Father, your dear Mother; comfort her in her Distress and Widowhood, and endeavour, as far as in you lieth, to make up the Loss she has sustain'd; this will

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be for your lasting Honour, may very acceptable in the Sight of God. Set before your Eyes his sweet Temper, and imitate it; and above all, make Religion your Business, as that which can give Peace and Satisfaction to the Soul; pray therefore, that your Minds may be cultivated by the Fear of the Lord. Thus to improve the Providence, will be not only for your temporal, but eternal Advantage.

3. In the next place: Those of you who were his intimate Friends, have sustain'd a very great Loss, one with whom you could take sweet Counsel, and whose Advice was prudent. Such Disappointments are hard to be born! That God has thus severely chastis'd us, ought to make us mourn, and lay things to heart, that it may not be said of us, as God complains of his People of old: *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken from the evil to come, Isa. lvii, 1.* So stupid and ignorant were they, as not to be sensible, that when they lost the righteous, they lost so much of their Strength; For *by Righteousness a Nation is establish'd, but Sin is a reproach to any People.* There-

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fore let us humble our selves before God, and make a religious Improvement of this great Affliction.

Once more, 4thly, since we must all die, and be as *Water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gather'd again*; since our Course must be finish'd in a little, a very little time, how necessary is it that both young and old should make Preparation for this Hour?

Let those of us who are young, and in the bloom of our Days, consider what it is we are aiming at, and grasping after; and whether we believe in our Consciences, such things will stand us in stead, when Distempers come upon us, or when we must contend with Death. And suppose we should live to old Age, which is very uncertain, then we may be sure all the Daughters of Musick will be silent, and their Voice shall be heard no more: Then shall the *smallest thing be a burden, even such as the Grasshopper*; then *Men go to their long home, and the mourners go about the streets*; whenever the *silver Cord is loos'd, or the golden Bowl broken, then the Dust returns to the Earth, and the Spirit to God who gave it, Eccl. xii.*

Let us therefore who are young, instead of putting far from us the evil

Day, consider how formidable the King of Terrors is, when Nature shrinks and is consum'd, and all her Gaiety extinguish'd, so as to give us the most lively Ideas of Horrour. Where there was once Proportion and Symmetry, then nothing appears but a rude heap and lump of rubbish.

Whatsoever we have taken pleasure in here below, will then be as tho it had never been; instead of Beauty and Sprightliness, now Paleness and Inactivity. We shall then be disabled from hearing the soft Charms of Musick, with which (it may be) we delighted our selves; no more can we imploy our selves in what we thought diverting. Let us then be wise, and not give our selves to Vanity and Folly. As we have opportunity of embracing the best and most glorious Religion that ever was instituted, I mean the Faith of the Gospel; so let us lose no time, but dedicate our selves to God, and resolve, by his Grace, to serve him with *Reverence and godly Fear*, and to *keep the Faith*. This will certainly yield us Peace and Pleasure of Mind for ever; whereas in the ways of Sin, we meet with nothing but Distraction and Disappointments, when by Religion we shall be prepar'd for a *Crown of Righteousness*.

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Let us not then fondly suppose that it is time enough for us to become sober and religious, and repent of our Follies. *How knowest thou, O Man, but that this Night thy Soul may be required of thee? And therefore now is the accepted time, now is the Day of Salvation: To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, &c.*

Again; Let those of you who are old consider, That according to the Course of Nature you cannot expect to live long, but must quickly give an account of your Stewardships to the great God; and therefore such ought to be watchful, lest they should be surpriz'd, and always prepar'd for a future State.

Moreover, let others, who probably are in the middle of their Days, consider and be careful, lest the World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches, prevent the Word of God from having its due effect upon their Souls. There is certainly a future State; and *what will it profit a Man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own Soul?* Set not your Hearts then upon any thing in this World lest you be disappointed, but place your Happiness at God's right Hand; and in the midst of worldly Prosperity be wise, and consider your latter end.

To conclude : What a happy thing will it be at last for us all to be able to say, *We have fought a good Fight, and kept the Faith?* What a pleasant Reflection will it be upon a dying bed, when we can each of us with Joy review our past Conduct, and thus address our selves to God ; Lord, it has been my Endeavour to *keep the Faith?* This he accepts; and pardons our Infirmities; and hence we may conclude, *there is laid up for us a Crown of Righteousness*, of Life and Immortality. Then shall we bid farewell to all our Troubles and Afflictions, and welcome everlasting Joy and solid Happiness; then shall we sing the Praises of God throughout eternal Ages, without ceasing or interruption. This is the Advantage of keeping the Faith, and this is the Reward of the Godly. May we all thus *run, and finish our Course*; may we have our Minds truly season'd with Religion; and may we be enabled certainly to conclude with the Apostle, that *there is laid up for us a Crown of Righteousness*: Which God of his infinite Mercy grant to every one of us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



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